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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RPO DUBAI 000393

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PROP](#) [PARM](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: IRAN WANTS CONGRATULATIONS, NOT CONDEMNATION OVER SECOND
NUCLEAR SITE

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CLASSIFIED BY: Alan Eyre, Director, Iran Regional Presence
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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: Iranian media and public statements by officials have maintained the IRIG's official line that the IRIG has not only not violated the NPT, but has gone beyond its IAEA obligations in its early disclosure of the second uranium enrichment facility near Qom. President Ahmadinejad, and the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi, IAEA Perm Rep Ali Asghar Soltanieh, and Majlis speaker Ali Larijani have all been heavily quoted in asserting the correctness of Iran's action and in discrediting Western claims that Iran has been caught cheating, while an editorial in hardline conservative daily Kayhan claimed Western allegations were a ploy to increase pressure on Iran heading into negotiations with the P5+1. Not surprisingly, the IRIG is highlighting the correctness of its actions while accusing the West of lacking goodwill on the eve of negotiations. End summary.

12. (C) Initial Iranian reaction to September 25 Western press reports of the existence of a second planned enrichment facility seemed rushed, perhaps because the story broke on a Friday, Iran's weekend. On early Friday afternoon Tehran time, there were official Iranian press accounts of "an informed official" confirming Western press accounts of this site. Later that afternoon the AEOI read a brief statement over the phone from its President Ali Akbar Salehi to Iranian press confirming that such a facility was being built "within the framework of IAEA regulations," and congratulating Supreme Leader Khamenei and the Iranian people for this latest step in the development of Iran's nuclear industry.

13. (C) In the days following, Iranian press has given significant coverage to the revelation that Iran is constructing a second nuclear enrichment facility near Qom. The IRIG message has been consistent: Iran has given the IAE notification of the facility a year before it is required to do so, stressing its interpretation that notification is not necessary until six months before fissile material is introduced into the facility. Since September 25, while Ahmadinejad was granting interviews in New York, the IRIG's talking points have tracked closely with Ahmadinejad's initial response to Western reporters' questions over the facility's existence. MFA spokesman Hassan Qashgavi, in his weekly press conference September 28, asserted that the installation was "completely legal" and that allegations Iran

had been caught red handed were no more than propaganda. The facility's purpose, Qashgavi said, was in keeping with the peaceful purposes of Iran's nuclear program but was necessary to "protect" Iran's achievements in developing nuclear technology.

¶4. (C) Salehi appeared on Iranian television news programs and was quoted extensively by print and internet media as highlighting Iran's transparency in providing notification to the IAEA well before it was required and stressing that the site was a part of Iran's peaceful nuclear energy program. Salehi told news agency ISNA September 26 that Western claims that the Iranians had tried to hide the facility were lies meant to deceive world opinion about the peaceful nature of Iran's program. In a television interview September 27, Salehi repeated earlier statements that the facility, when it was operational, would not enrich uranium above five percent level needed for nuclear power generation. He said that the facility was intended as a backup for the work already begun at Natanz. He, along with IAEA Perm Rep Soltanieh, have stressed that the IAEA has "officially thanked" the IRIG for its disclosure of the site.

¶5. (C) In a September 27 interview with ISNA Secretary of the National Security Council Saeed Jalili, warned that the US, France and Britain, in their manner of announcing the facility's existence, threatened to repeat previous mistakes in attempting to negotiate with Iran. Jalili said the allegations were a repetition of the 'carrot and stick' approach that sought to pressure Iran into suspending its enrichment program. Jalili added that Iran's disclosure had been a act of transparency to show goodwill on the verge of negotiations. Likewise, Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani in an September 27 interview said that despite repeated Western allegations against Iran, it remained ready for negotiations. The West sought continuously to impose its will on Iran, and knowing that it could not, now sought to

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create suspicion over Iran's actions.

¶6. (C), In a September 27 editorial hardline conservative daily Kayhan dismissed claims that Western intelligence agencies had detected the site and forced Iran to acknowledge its existence. To the contrary, Kayhan wrote, Iran had voluntarily notified the IAEA, and now Western powers sought to use Iran's good faith for leverage in the upcoming negotiations.

¶7. (C) Comment: Statements by Iranian officials concerning Western press accounts of its second enrichment site are all 'on message' and reflect the talking points that Iran disclosed this facility long before it had to under its IAEA obligations, and that Iran is surprised by Western mis-character ization of Iran's motivations and actions, which it takes as further evidence of a lack of goodwill on behalf of the West.

EYRE